

# The Mournful Widow's Garland

IN THREE PARTS.



**G**ood people now both old and young draw near,  
And with attentive heed I pray give ear  
To me, while I do you this thing make known,  
Enough to pierce a heart if made of stone.

'Tis of a coker, one Charles Cox by name,  
Who from the island of Port Royal came  
O'er to England with his wife and children dear,  
And in Chatham was settled, as we hear.

The children they brought with them were three,  
They had two since, and all living be;  
The eldest of the five, as it is told,  
He was a lad about fifteen years old.

This man was forc'd from his family.

In the royal fleet to serve his majesty:

And as they were opposing of proud Spain,  
He and some other poor men were slain.

Doubtless, most of them wives and children had.  
Which dismal news, no doubt, makes them sad,  
And causes the tears from their eyes to run,  
Crying, O dear! alas! we are undone.

Amongst them all now I must notice take,  
What moan this man's wife and children make  
For loss of him who was their only stay.

And stuff of their true comfort night and day.

When the news came that her husband was dead,  
She said if so all joys from me are fled;

And I am left in tears with children five,  
Knowing no friend on earth I have alive.

For to support me in this dismal case;  
'Tis this doth part me from my native place:  
Where can I comfort get in time of need?  
What must I do my tender babes to feed?

The Lord doth know three of my babes are small,  
What shift now can I make to keep them all?  
If I should steal, for that I should be blam'd;  
And for to beg, alas! I am ashamed.

My eldest is a son, but for his share  
For food and raiment he will take no care.  
If I for comfort to the parish go,  
Out of the town we shall be turn'd, I know.

## PART II.

**T**HUS making of her moan in came her son,  
Who she complain'd was such an idle one.  
He said, Mother, my father's dead I here.

But do not grieve, forbear to shed a tear:  
I must confess that I have been stubborn;  
The which has caus'd you oftentimes to mourn:  
I have not been so bad but you may see  
I altogether now as good can be.

Dear mother, I will be a child to you  
For duty; and for care a husband too  
So far as strength gives leave I'll strive indeed  
My mother and dear sisters for to feed.

For stubbornness, mother, I've had the name,  
For which I know there's many did me blame;  
But I will take much care now out of hand,  
To gain the love of God, and praise of men.

When thus he spake his mother wept for joy,  
To hear such words from him who was a boy:  
Admiring any who'd run such wicked race.  
Should thus consider his poor mother's case.

So presently he out for work did seek,  
And got a place of six shillings a week:  
With which money his mother, it is said,  
And children to their hearts content were fed.

But now, behold! here comes a change at last,  
The which doth this poor comfort blast:  
This hopeful youth was brought home sick one day,  
The which did quite her new rais'd hopes destroy.

We understand this sickness was to dear,  
He was the dearest child she had on earth;  
Tho' young in years he took great care indeed  
To help his mother in her time of need.

As his mother was standing near his bed,  
And with sad weeping eyes sunk in his head:

He said, Mother, to weep pray refrain,  
I hope the Lord will raise me up again.

To be a help and comfort unto you.  
Mother, I'll take such care there are but few  
Shall take the like, if please God I do live.  
Therefore be of good heart and do not grieve.  
For several days he lay in grief and smart,  
To comfort him she with some goods did part.  
At length this lad did change his tone we hear.  
Saying, Now I must die, my mother dear.

If I die in my youth I'm not the first.  
Pray, mother, do not providence mistrust:  
He that has power to shorten my days,  
Is able to you a greater friend to raise.

I have not long to live I plainly see,  
I am cut off in my mortality;  
My sun will set long time before 'tis noon,  
O death! why dost thou take me off so soon.

Pray, mother, bring my sisters unto me.  
Mother, before I die I would them see.  
With that she fetch'd them forth unto the bed,  
And hearing them he turn'd about his head.

He said, Sisters from you I must away,  
I in this world have not long to stay;  
You in few minutes more from me must part;  
I find that death has seiz'd my tender heart.

Before I die this counsel I will give,  
Pray honour my dear mother while you live,  
And not to cause her aged eyes to flow,  
But unto her a just obedience show.

The next advice that I do give to you,  
Learn you your books and mind your prayers too.  
And go not in a race as many run.  
Lest you at last be utterly undone.

You see time is uncertain here on earth.  
And that nothing more certain is than death;  
Mind that you're good unto your mother dear,  
Then when death comes his dart you need not fear.

Pray, mother, do not grieve, tho' in distress,  
God will provide for the widow and fatherless;  
Such are objects of his love, he cry'd,  
Then with a groan he turn'd his eyes and dy'd.

## PART III.

**H**E buried was, she for the same did pay;  
To raise the sum she made her goods away.  
And at the last was forc'd to sell her bed,  
To buy herself and hungry babes some bread.

This being done, she got a bed of straw,  
In which they lay; and this poor woman saw  
No hopes of comfort now before her eyes,  
But her poor hungry babes making sad cries.

She said, Oh cruel fate! why didst thee  
Cast down this sad affliction now on me;  
My sorrows are more than I'm able to bear,  
I fear 'will drive me quite into despair.

So this pass'd, at length, upon a day,  
She did design her children for to slay:  
Beginning with the eldest of them, who  
Said, Mother, what do you intend to do?

To kill me now? pray do not serve me so.  
Save but my live, I will a begging go  
To get some food, your hunger to suffice,  
Hearing these words the tears fell from her eyes.

Then out she went some succour for to get,  
And as she then was going in the street,  
A young sailor, who having store of gold,  
Seeing her beg he did her then behold.

Seeing this young creature look'd so poor,  
He follow'd her home to her own door;  
And when that he beheld her woeful case,  
With grief the tears did run down his face.

So then with tears this woman did impart  
To him the cause of all her grief and smart;  
Hearing her moan this loving sailor he  
Gave her a guinea out charity.

He said, I am griev'd to see your condition,  
I now will draw you a petition;  
And take thy children then along with thee,  
And go with speed unto his majesty.

I'll write at length the cause of all your woe,  
And with you I unto the king will go,  
Who is the only man, as I am sure,  
That's now alive for to comfort the poor.

Hearing these words she wept for joy indeed,  
Then to the court away she went with speed;  
And when the king heard her petition read,  
Being of a tender heart he shook his head.

He said, Bring the poor woman unto me,  
That I may her and her poor children see.  
They all were brought and on their knees did fall;  
The king pray'd to the Lord to bless them all.

He very earnestly did them behold,  
And threw them twenty pieces of broad gold;  
Saying, That's to nourish thee and thine,  
And thou shalt be a pensioner of mine.

Thy pension twenty pounds a year shall be,  
And once a year it shall be paid to thee:  
So now arise, begone, and whilst you live  
Unto your children good instructions give

According to your mean capacity.  
This woman humbly thank'd his majesty;  
Praying to God for his long happy reign,  
Then she unto the sailor went again.

Return'd many hearty thanks to he,  
Who said, Give thanks to God, and not to me.  
Then home she went praising the Lord on high,  
For sending friends in her extremity.

She said, I wish all people would take care,  
And not in time of troubles to despair:  
But wait God's leisure, and no doubt but he  
His due time from want will set them free.